

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM USMISSION GENEVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1317

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 1692

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CSCE, PFOR, XG

SUBJECT: CSCE: SOVIETS PRESS FOR SHORT EASTER RECESS AND ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUP ON STAGE III

REF: STATE 44031

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING A BRIEF VISIT TO MOSCOW BY SOVIET DELEGATION HEAD KOVALEV, SOVIETS LAST WEEK MADE UNUSUALLY STRONG EFFORT TO REDUCE EASTER RECESS TO ABSOLUTE MINIMUM, AND PRESSED HARD FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUP ON FINAL DOCUMENTS AND STAGE III. DESPITE HEAVY SOVIET PRESSURES, USDEL FOLLOWED REFTEL GUIDANCE AND SUPPORTED EC-9 POSITION ON STAGE III WORKING GROUP IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH SOVIETS, WHO SEEM SATISFIED WITH FINAL OUTCOME ON THIS SUBJECT. HOWEVER, IN WAKE OF SUBSTANTIAL SOVIET CONCESSIONS ON PEACEFUL CHANGE ISSUE, AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT OUR SOMEWHAT HIGHER PROFILE ON BASKET III, WHICH CAUSES US TO OPPOSE  
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SOVIETS ON SOME SENSITIVE ISSUES, WE THOUGHT IT DESIRABLE

TO MAKE SOME LOW KEY EFFORTS TO HELP FINAL COMPROMISE SOLUTION ON EASTER BREAK. KOVALEV THANKED US WARMLY FOR OUR ROLE ON THAT ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

2. SOVIET DELEGATION HEAD KOVALEV VISITED MOSCOW DURING THE PERIOD FEB. 28 - MAR. 4. WHEN HE RETURNED TO GENEVA A WELL-INFORMED SOVIET DELEGATE TOLD US KOVALEV HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO SPEED UP THE WORK OF CSCE. UPON HIS RETURN, KOVALEV IMMEDIATELY TOOK A PERSONAL INTEREST IN NORMALLY ROUTINE DISCUSSION OF NEXT FOUR WEEK WORK PROGRAM, (COVERING PERIOD MARCH 10 - APRIL 11) AND REPLACED THE USUAL SOVIET REPRESENTATIVES ON THIS SUBJECT WITH DEPUTY DELEGATION HEAD DUBININ. MAIN POINTS AT ISSUE WERE ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUP ON FINAL DOCUMENTS AND STAGE III, AND DURATION OF EASTER RECESS.

3. ON ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUP ON FINAL DOCUMENTS AND STAGE III, SOVIETS PRESSED HARD FOR A CLEAR COMMITMENT IN SOME FORM TO SETTING UP A WORKING GROUP WITHIN THE NEXT FOUR WEEKS, AS PROPOSED TWO WEEKS AGO BY SWEDES (GENEVA 1167). EC-9 POSITION WAS THAT IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO BEGIN DISCUSSION OF THESE SUBJECTS, BUT THAT DEBATE SHOULD, FOR THE TIME BEING, CONTINUE IN COORDINATING COMMITTEE. IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFTEL INSTRUCTIONS, WE SUPPORTED EC-9 POSITION ON THIS ISSUE, EXPLAINING TO SOVIETS THAT, WHEN ALL DELEGATIONS FELT TIME WAS RIGHT, WE WOULD BE FLEXIBLE ON MODALITIES FOR THIS DISCUSSION. RESULT WAS THAT FOUR EXTRA MEETINGS WERE ALLOTTED TO COORDINATING COMMITTEE DURING NEXT FOUR WEEKS FOR CONTINUATION OF DISCUSSION OF SWEDISH PROPOSAL. GIVEN MOOD OF WESTERN DELEGATIONS, WE WOULD EXPECT AT LEAST TACIT AGREEMENT TO ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKING GROUP ON FINAL DOCUMENTS AND STAGE III DURING THE NEXT 2-3 WEEKS.

4. SOVIETS MADE A STRENUOUS EFFORT TO HAVE NO EASTER RECESS WHATSOEVER. POSITIONS OF EC-9 AND NATO DELS WERE SOMEWHAT AMBIGUOUS, AND ALTHOUGH MOST SAID THEY COULD BE "FLEXIBLE," THEY SEEMED TO WANT AT LEAST A SHORT BREAK. HOWEVER, SMALLER DELS (E.G. PORTUGAL, MALTA) ARGUED FOR A LONGER RECESS, AND NEUTRALS PROPOSED A "COMPROMISE" (RECESS FROM MARCH 21 - APRIL 1) WHICH WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO SOVIETS. KOVALEV HIMSELF RUDELY REJECTED ALL FURTHER COMPROMISE SUGGESTIONS, AND DEPUTY DEL HEAD DUBININ APPEALED

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TO US DEL ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS DURING SOMETIMES ACRIMONIOUS WEEK-LONG MARATHON DEBATE BETWEEN SOVIETS AND OTHERS FOR ASSISTANCE ON WHAT SOVIETS CONSIDERED A POLITICAL ISSUE OF CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE. IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC SOVIET REQUESTS, WE ENCOURAGED PORTUGUESE DEL (WHICH ALONE PREFERRED A TWO WEEK RECESS) TO MODIFY THEIR EXTREME POSITION, AND ASSISTED SWISS IN FINDING FINAL COMPROMISE SOLUTION UNDER WHICH CONFERENCE WILL RECESS

FROM MARCH 27 TO AFTERNOON OF APRIL 1, WITH ONLY BASKET II  
AND III MEETINGS DURING WEEK BEFORE EASTER. KOVALEV AFTERWARDS  
THANKED US WARMLY FOR OUR HELP.

5. COMMENT: IN DECIDING TO HELP SOVIETS ON RECESS ISSUE,  
TO WHICH THEY OBVIOUSLY ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE, WE TOOK  
INTO ACCOUNT FACT THAT WE WERE CONCURRENTLY OPPOSING THEIR  
POSITION ON ANOTHER PROCEDURAL POINT (STAGE III WORKING  
GROUP), WHICH THEY ALSO REGARDED AS IMPORTANT SYMBOLICALLY,  
AS WELL AS ON TWO KEY BASKET III ISSUES (JOURNALISTS PAPER  
AND HUMAN CONTACTS INTRODUCTION). IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES,  
AND IN WAKE OF SOVIET CONCESSIONS ON PEACEFUL CHANGE, IT  
SEEMED APPROPRIATE TO BE MILDLY HELPFUL TO SOV DEL DURING  
DEBATE ON EASTER RECESS. DALE

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